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GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND HISTORY OF CANADA

Ahmedov Azimjon Ilhomovich
The teacher of Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages
Qubulov Ro'zimuxammad Shavkatbek o'g'li
Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages,
Teaching methods and translation studies, 2nd year's student.

Annotation: The first section of this two-part paper describes my historical geographical career, particularly the topics and issues I have pursued and the changing intellectual environment in which they have been situated. The second section offers a summary interpretation of the emerging human geography of early-modern Canada followed by some reflections on its contemporary implications. This interpretation stresses the extent to which boundaries and discontinuities marked early Canada, and contrasts a pinched Canadian experience with the land with a far more expansive American one. It shows how deeply difference was constructed and ingrained in the Canadian past, and suggests some challenges and opportunities that follow from this inheritance.

Despite Canada's great size, it is one of the world's most sparsely populated countries. This fact, coupled with the grandeur of the landscape, has been central to the sense of Canadian national identity, as expressed by the Dublin-born writer Anna Brownell Jameson, who explored central Ontario in 1837 and remarked exultantly on "the seemingly interminable line of trees before you; the boundless wilderness around you; the mysterious depths amid the multitudinous foliage, where foot of man hath never penetrated…the solitude in which we proceeded mile after mile, no human being, no human dwelling within sight." Although Canadians are comparatively few in number, they have crafted what many observers consider to be a model multicultural society, welcoming immigrant populations from every other continent. In addition, Canada harbours and exports a wealth of natural resources and intellectual capital equaled by few other countries.

Canada is officially bilingual in English and French, reflecting the country's history as ground once contested by two of Europe's great powers. The word Canada is derived from the Huron-Iroquois kanata, meaning a village or settlement. In the 16th century, French explorer Jacques Cartier used the name Canada to refer to the area around the settlement that is now Quebec city. Later, Canada was used as a synonym for New France, which, from 1534 to 1763, included all the French possessions along the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. After the British conquest of New France, the name Quebec was sometimes used instead of Canada. The name Canada was fully

ISSN 2181-3187

restored after 1791, when Britain divided old Quebec into the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada (renamed in 1841 Canada West and Canada East, respectively, and collectively called Canada). In 1867 the British North America Act created a confederation from three colonies (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada) called the Dominion of Canada. The act also divided the old colony of Canada into the separate provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Dominion status allowed Canada a large measure of self-rule, but matters pertaining to international diplomacy and military alliances were reserved to the British crown. Canada became entirely self-governing within the British Empire in 1931, though full legislative independence was not achieved until 1982, when Canada obtained the right to amend its own constitution.

Canada shares a 5,525-mile- (8,890-km-) long border with the United States (including Alaska)—the longest border in the world not patrolled by military forces—and the overwhelming majority of its population lives within 185 miles (300 km) of the international boundary. Although Canada shares many similarities with its southern neighbour—and, indeed, its popular culture and that of the United States are in many regards indistinguishable—the differences between the two countries, both temperamental and material, are profound. “The central fact of Canadian history,” observed the 20th-century literary critic Northrop Frye, is “the rejection of the American Revolution.” Contemporary Canadians are inclined to favour orderly central government and a sense of community over individualism; in international affairs, they are more likely to serve the role of peacemaker instead of warrior, and, whether at home or abroad, they are likely to have a pluralistic way of viewing the world. More than that, Canadians live in a society that in most legal and official matters resembles Britain—at least in the English-speaking portion of the country. Quebec, in particular, exhibits French adaptations: more than three-fourths of its population speaks French as their primary language. The French character in Quebec is also reflected in differences in religion, architecture, and schooling. Elsewhere in Canada, French influence is less apparent, confined largely to the dual use of French and English for place names, product labels, and road signs. The French and British influences are supplemented by the cultures of the country’s Native American peoples (in Canada often collectively called the First Nations) and Inuit peoples, the former being far greater in number and the latter enjoying semiautonomous status in Canada’s newest territory, Nunavut. In addition, the growing number of immigrants from other European countries, Southeast Asia, and Latin America has made Canada even more broadly multicultural.

Canada has been an influential member of the Commonwealth and has played a leading role in the organization of French-speaking countries known as La Francophonie. It was a founding member of the United Nations and has been active in a number of major UN agencies and other worldwide operations. In 1989 Canada joined the Organization of American States and signed a free trade agreement with the

ISSN 2181-3187

United States, a pact that was superseded in 1992 by the North American Free Trade Agreement (which also includes Mexico). A founding member (1961) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Canada is also a member of the Group of Seven (G7), which includes the world's seven largest industrial democracies and, as the Group of Eight (G8), had included Russia until it was indefinitely suspended from membership in 2014.

The national capital is Ottawa, Canada's fourth largest city. It lies some 250 miles (400 km) northeast of Toronto and 125 miles (200 km) west of Montreal, respectively Canada's first and second cities in terms of population and economic, cultural, and educational importance. The third largest city is Vancouver, a centre for trade with the Pacific Rim countries and the principal western gateway to Canada's developing interior. Other major metropolitan areas include Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta; Quebec city, Quebec; and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Land of Canada

Canada's total land area includes thousands of adjacent islands, notably Newfoundland in the east and those of the Arctic Archipelago in the north. Canada is bounded by the Arctic Ocean to the north, Greenland (a self-governing part of the Danish kingdom) to the northeast, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, 12 states of the United States to the south, and the Pacific Ocean and the U.S. state of Alaska to the west; in addition, tiny Saint-Pierre and Miquelon (an archipelagic territory of France) lies off Newfoundland.

In longitude Canada extends from approximately 52° to 141° W, a distance that spans six time zones. In latitude it extends from approximately 42° to 83° N. With its vast Arctic and subarctic territories, Canada is often considered a country only of the far north; however, the peninsula of southern Ontario juts deeply south into the heartland of the United States, and its southernmost point, Middle Island in Lake Erie, is at the same latitude as northern California. Canada occupies a strategic global location, lying on great circle routes (the shortest line joining any two places on the globe) between the United States and Europe and, to a lesser degree, Asia. As a result, many international commercial flights track across Canada.

The combination of physical geography and discontinuous settlement has led to a strong sense of regionalism in Canada, and popular regional terms often overlap. The Atlantic Provinces include all of the Appalachian region except the Quebec portion. If the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is excluded, the three remaining east-coast provinces are called the Maritime Provinces or the Maritimes. Quebec and Ontario are usually referred to separately but sometimes together, as Central Canada. The West usually means all four provinces west of Ontario, but British Columbia may be referred to alone and the other three collectively as the Prairie Provinces or the Prairies. Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are referred to as the North.

ISSN 2181-3187

Canada contains within its borders a vast variety of geographic features. In general, the country's landform structure can be considered as a vast basin more than 3,220 miles (5,200 km) in diameter. The Cordillera in the west, the Appalachians in the southeast, the mountains of northern Labrador and of Baffin Island in the northeast, and the Innuitian Mountains in the north form its high rim, while Hudson Bay, set close to the centre of the enormous platform of the Canadian Shield, occupies the basin bottom. The western rim of the basin is higher and more massive than its eastern counterpart, and pieces of the rim, notably in the far northwest and in the south, are missing.

The main lines of Canadian landforms continue well into the United States, intimately linking the geography of both countries. To create such a large country, Canadians had to forge transportation and communication links in an east-west direction, against the physiographic grain of the continent. The Canadian North remains one of the least settled and least economically exploited parts of the world.

Canada can be divided into six physiographic regions: the Canadian Shield, the interior plains, the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence lowlands, the Appalachian region, the Western Cordillera, and the Arctic Archipelago.

By far the largest of Canada's physiographic regions, the Canadian Shield (sometimes called the Precambrian Shield) occupies about half of the total area of the country and is centred on Hudson Bay. The shield consists of some of the world's oldest rocks, which were folded by mountain-building movements and cut down by erosion until the area was reduced almost to a plain. It was warped and folded in places, so parts of it now stand much higher than others, especially around its outer edges. In the north the rim is about 7,000 feet (2,000 metres) above sea level, and fjords with walls from 2,000 to 3,000 feet (600 to 900 metres) high extend many miles into the mountain masses. The Labrador Highlands, including the Torngat, Kaumajet, and Kiglapait mountains, lie south of Hudson Strait. Along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec, the shield rim is a 2,000-foot (600-metre) escarpment, the Laurentide Scarp. The rim is almost imperceptible in southern Ontario, but in northern Ontario it rises again to almost 1,500 feet (450 metres) above the northern shore of Lake Superior. From Manitoba northwestward, the shield edge is marked by a large number of lakes.

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